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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the impact of the Individually Guided Education/Secondary Project (IGE/S) in a middle school. Participation observation is used to understand how the intervention process is incorporated into everyday patterns and norms of the school. No individualization of instruction occurred. The findings suggest that basic teaching assumptions of the middle school staff remained unchallenged. Teachers saw the problem of reform as maintaining control and discipline so students would acquiesce to the authority of professionals. The IGE/S activities made the prevailing school orientations seem psychologically appealing. Further, the reform functioned externally to legitimate the school program within the larger communities. (Author)

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Technical Report No. 400

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL AND REFORM: A CASE STUDY OF IGE/S

by

Thomas Popkewitz

Report from the Project on IGE Secondary

Wisconsin Research and Development
Center for Cognitive Learning
The University of Wisconsin
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WISCONSIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
CENTER FOR COGNITIVE LEARNING

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The mission of the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning is to help learners develop as rapidly and effectively as possible their potential as human beings and as contributing members of society. The R&D Center is striving to fulfill this goal by

- conducting research to discover more about how children learn
- developing improved instructional strategies, processes and materials for school administrators, teachers, and children, and
- offering assistance to educators and citizens which will help transfer the outcomes of research and development into practice

PROGRAM

The activities of the Wisconsin R&D Center are organized around one unifying theme, Individually Guided Education.

FUNDING

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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the impact of the Individually Guided Education/Secondary Project in a middle school. Participation observation is used to understand how the intervention process is incorporated into everyday patterns and norms of the school. No individualization of instruction occurred. The findings suggest that basic teaching assumptions of the middle school staff remained unchallenged. Teachers saw the problem of reform as maintaining control and discipline so students would acquiesce to the authority of professionals. The IGE/S activities made the prevailing school orientations seem psychologically appealing. Further, the reform functioned externally to legitimate the school program within the larger communities.

I

INTRODUCTION

The recent efforts in educational reform have given attention to the institutional nature of school life. This focus, in part, resulted from the failures of the curricular reform movement of the 1960s. The development of "new" physics, mathematics, and social science did little to instill the intellectual excitement the educational planners sought for classrooms. The failure of reform, researchers revealed, reflected the planners' lack of consideration of the social organization of the schools.[1] Curricular reforms tended to be incorporated into the existing patterns of conduct and belief. The "new" curriculum was taught just as the "old" had been.

One attempt to change the social structure of school life is the Individually Guided Education/Secondary (IGE/S) Project. The project is part of a larger effort of the Wisconsin Research and Development Center concerned with individualizing school instruction. The Center's previous focus was on elementary schools, and IGE/S was funded to extend the Center's work to middle and secondary schools. The project seeks to engage school staffs in planning, implementing, and evaluating school-wide efforts to individualize instruction. School staffs are to think critically about, design, and implement alternative educational experiences for secondary students.

This paper is concerned with the impact of the IGE/S project in a specific middle school. Through the use of case study,[2] this paper examines the IGE/S intervention process to investigate how an existing educational organization incorporates proposed changes into its everyday patterns. Attention is given to the norms, beliefs, and dispositions which give direction to the actions of teachers and administrators. This level of analysis is concerned with illuminating the interpretive perspective by which individuals give meanings to the events of school life.

The analysis is in three sections. First is a discussion of the intended purposes and activities of the middle school IGE/S project. The description is concerned with surface characteristics such as what groups were formed and what programmatic changes occurred. A second section focuses on underlying meanings given to these activities. Third is a concluding section which includes recommendations.

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[1] See S. Sarason, 1971.

[2] For discussion of the case study approach to educational evaluation see Popkewitz and Wehlage, 1975; and Tabachnick, 1976.

II

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND IGE/S

The project's major focus of attention during the 1975-76 year was a middle school in a small city near the Madison, Wisconsin R & D Center. The school has a somewhat unusual physical location. Built at the edge of a large public park, it is bordered on three sides by a playing field, meadows, and a pond. The residential character of the school's immediate neighborhood is single family houses, many occupied by professionals and university faculty. The school is part of a consolidated district which draws students from a nearby rural community which is more conservative than its city counterpart.

The school is moderately sized with 50 teachers and approximately 750 students in grades six, seven, and eight. The staff consists of regular academic, related arts, and music and physical education teachers, in addition to two guidance counselors, a principal, and an assistant principal. The faculty is organized into teams of four teachers. The two sixth grade teams function differently from the upper grade teams, cooperatively planning courses of study in all curricular subjects. Each teacher has instructional responsibility for a specific group of children (25-30), like an elementary teacher in a self-contained classroom. The seventh and eighth grade teams, however, are organized by subject matter. Each team in those grades has teachers representing social studies, mathematics, science, and English. Also, the teachers belong to subject departments which cross grades. Teachers teach 50-minute periods in their specialty and meet approximately 130 students a week.

METHODOLOGY

The project was evaluated through the methodology of participant observation, and the case study style is used to report it in order to identify and discuss the social complexities of the intervention scheme. This methodology was chosen for two reasons. First, the study is part of the developmental process of the project. The case study is to help planners make future refinements or alterations in their program. The descriptions of the school interactions can reveal purposes and consequences of action. Their closeness to the events enables planners to understand why things happen and therefore reflect more critically about the effects of the intervention scheme. Second, the descriptions can be useful to others who confront similar problems about schooling. Although the knowledge gained is not causal and predictive, the emerging generalizations can help others focus upon concerns, problems, and possible unanticipated consequences in the situa-

tions they confront.

Data were collected in three ways: (1) Observations of faculty meetings concerned with IGE/S programs. Some of these meetings involved small groups of teachers planning a dimension of the "change process." General faculty meetings to discuss programs and instructional classes in which teachers were using programs developed through the IGE/S project were also observed. (2) Informal discussions with faculty about their work in the IGE/S programs. These discussions occurred throughout the school year and referred to specific meetings or issues. (3) Formal interviews with the faculty. Interviews during the school year focused upon specific activities or events such as a teacher attending a professional conference related to IGE/S. Extensive interviews were conducted at the end of the year with 18 faculty and 2 administrators. These interviews were 30-60 minutes long. Data were collected from December to May.

Analysis of the data occurred in two interrelated stages. First, the field work sought to invent categories to describe and explain the events. While data were being collected, recurring patterns or trends were identified. Initial observations, for example, revealed an emphasis upon achieving consensus in decision making. The category of consensus was given validity through checking other data, subsequent observations, and staff interviews.

Second, the data were re-examined after the completion of the field work. This second dimension of analysis was built upon the initial research. Here, though, the entire range of data was available for critical scrutiny. (At this point, the researcher is no longer restricted in analysis by his own participation in the events. Counter-examples to categories can be sought, validity and recurring patterns can be checked, and new relationships among the data identified.) The analysis continued into the final written stage. The search for appropriate metaphors for communicating findings was an integral dimension of the research report.

PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE PROJECT

The IGE/S project has a three-fold purpose. First, it is designated to help teachers develop individualized instructional programs. The meaning of individualized instruction is left ambiguous in the project's technical reports. It is related to a notion of continuous progress which requires that "learning activities and sequences be varied in recognition of the fact that each person has a unique pattern and rate of emotional, intellectual, and physical growth which is essentially continuous but which is likely to have high, low, and plateau periods" (Struve and Schultz, 1976, p. 6). The definition was left open to permit unique or idiosyncratic innovations. The second purpose of IGE/S is to help school staffs develop organizational patterns which are concerned with individualizing instruction. This follows from the assumption that school reform must be based upon a staff competent to initiate and sustain critical dialogues about instruction. The third purpose is to help schools employ shared decision

making as a part of their planning processes. Called an "interactive model," shared decision making allows teachers, administrators, parents, and students to participate in the making of decisions which affect them.

To implement IGE/S programs, the project has two levels of operation. First is the development of planning processes to individualize instruction in specific schools. It is this dimension which will be the focus of this paper. Second is maintaining a mechanism (a network of schools) by which teachers can share ideas and experiences related to individualization. The network of schools did function during the year of study but is related only tangentially to the specific work in the studied school.

THE IGE/S WORKSHOP AND TASK FORCES

After initial contacts with the middle school administrator, and with school board approval, the IGE/S staff organized a workshop prior to the start of school.[3] Thirty-seven teachers, two administrators, and seven parents attended six morning sessions. The focus of the sessions, identified by a prior planning group of four teachers, was "to implement a change process in the middle school." The organization of the workshop involved three parts.

First, the workshop activities were designed to have the staff obtain consensus on educational purposes of a change process. Agreement was obtained through construction of a hierarchy of purposes (Figure 1). Purposes or reasons for implementing changes in the middle school program were discussed in a morning session, and after a broad range of purposes were identified, they were arranged hierarchically. More specific purposes ("to develop communication channels between parents and staff") were placed at the top of a chart and general, more inclusive purposes ("to enhance human dignity") at the bottom. The teachers reconsidered each of the purposes and chose one as the central focus of the workshop. This purpose was "to develop a school program which develops specific competencies based upon individual needs and interests." The following workshop activities focused on that purpose to develop specific school-wide individualization strategies.

The construction of a purpose hierarchy was thought to be an important dimension of the planning process for several reasons. The agreement on purposes was to provide a single collective focus for the group and enable people with diverse ideas to agree upon a single set of purposes. The group processes in developing the hierarchy would provide a commitment to achieve the purposes. And, finally, the pur-

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[3] The research began in the winter, and the account of the workshop is reconstructed from documents produced during that time and through discussions with participants.

Middle School 1975-76 Change Program
To develop communication channels between parents and staff
To develop understanding between parents and staff
To get parent involvement in decision making
To consider the teacher-advisor system
To provide individual student-teacher contact
To facilitate communication between students, parents, and teachers
To develop a sense of security and trust
To allow every child to receive attention
To allow every child to feel worthwhile
To create a positive learning atmosphere and environment
To create an open atmosphere where students want to learn
To develop a school program which develops specific competencies based on individual needs and interests
To allow the opportunity for self responsibility and commitment
To be able to express individual thoughts and feelings
To question, understand and deal with own thoughts, feelings, and actions
To have experience in taking responsibility for own actions, thoughts, and feelings
To learn how decisions (actions) affect others and self
To build positive feelings and trust about self and others
To be able to deal successfully with situations, problems, etc.
To attain goals
To build self concept, feel a sense of worth, and have respect for others
To be able to interact positively and successfully with others
To have people feel good and comfortable
To have effective lifelong learning
To improve not quite the whole world
To enhance human dignity

Figure 1. Hierarchy of purposes (primary purpose circled).

pose hierarchy would provide a criterion for later decision making.[4]

The second part of the workshop was to identify possible alternative strategies for developing "competencies based upon individual needs and interests." Teachers brainstormed about possible more specific goals and related school programs. Among other items, teachers wanted to give attention to "developing an increased responsibility system" or introducing "more flexible scheduling." As the discussion continued, the staff formulated "We Agree" statements, which listed general, educational aims the staff would use to guide their efforts toward changing the school program. Among these was "We agree to identify and meet at least one need (skill or personal) of each student in each class." The "We Agree" statements also had concrete proposals for school-wide programs, such as "We agree to have school-wide uninterrupted sustained silent reading one period per week."

The third dimension of the workshop was to translate the purpose hierarchy and alternative strategies into a school-wide plan of action. Five tasks were identified, related purpose hierarchies constructed (see Figure 2), implementation timelines constructed, and groups of teachers organized as task forces. The task forces were:

1. U.S.S.R.--Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading. This task force was to implement a school period in which children could read without interruption. The purpose of U.S.S.R. was, as one teacher stated, "to make kids read and to make it enjoyable."

2. Flexible Scheduling. This task force was to develop alternative classroom scheduling that would produce greater individualization.

3. Club. This task force was to organize periods in which students could pursue interests other than those found in traditional school courses.

4. Parent Conferences. This task force was to develop alternative forms of parent conferences to provide parents with more information about children's studies.

5. Teacher-Advisor. This task force was to provide a school-wide program in which teachers and students could develop closer personal relationships.

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[4]Much of this is discussed in Struve and Schultz, 1976.

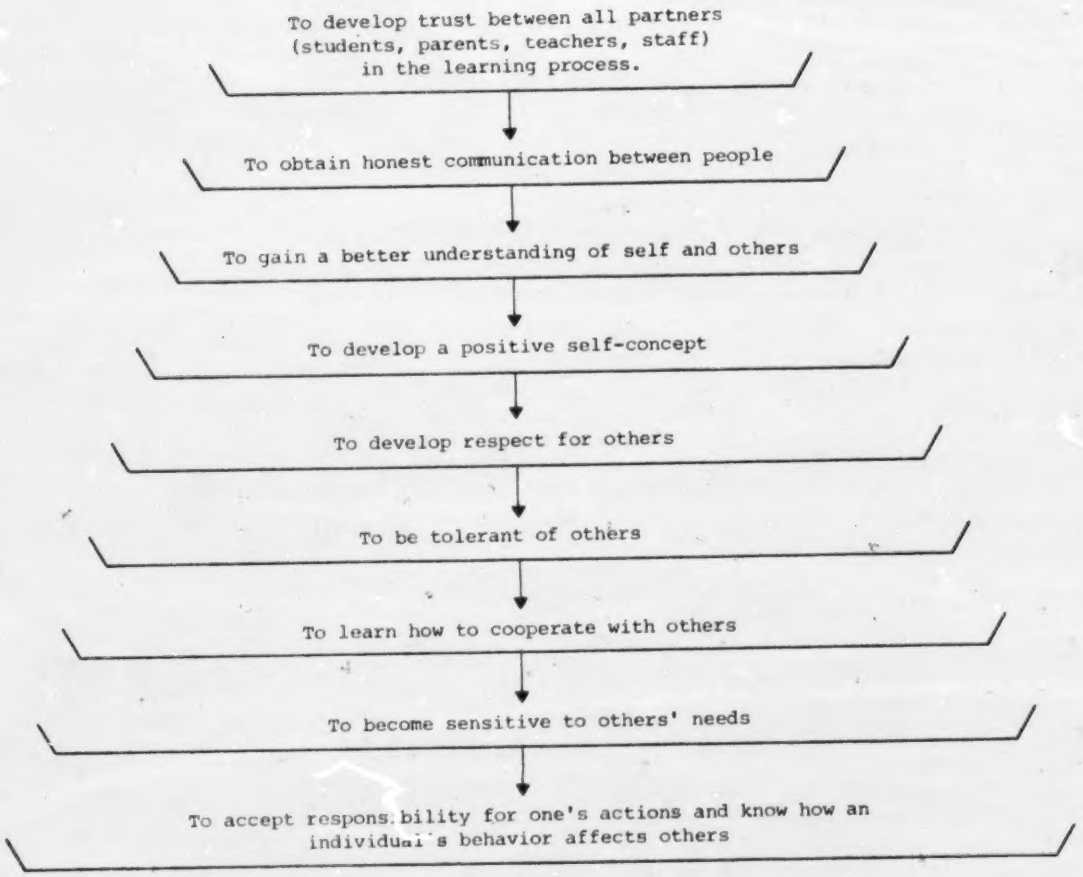
To develop trust between all partners (students, parents, teachers, staff) in the learning process.
To obtain honest communication between people
To gain a better understanding of self and others
To develop a positive self-concept
To develop respect for others
To be tolerant of others
To learn how to cooperate with others
To become sensitive to others' needs
To accept responsibility for one's actions and know how an individual's behavior affects others

Figure 2. Purpose hierarchy for human development activities of the teacher/advisor program.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TASK FORCE PLANS

Approximately 4-6 teachers volunteered to participate in each task force. They were to plan and implement the agreed-upon programs. Each of the task forces met frequently during most of the school year, and for the first two-thirds of the year many of the groups met once a week. The teachers involved in each group seemed eager to implement the specific program and worked hard to develop appropriate materials and procedures. The teachers involved in implementing a teacher-advisor system, for example, produced sets of materials for teachers, organized an introduction session for the entire student body, and struggled with the organizational scheduling to arrange teacher-advisor periods.

The teachers' commitment to implementing the task force objective was underscored by the scheduled time of meetings. Most schools provide little time during the day for teachers to reflect about their roles and the purposes of instruction. This middle school was no exception. The day was taken up with administrative chores, teaching classes, or grading papers. Further, the teachers' time was so fragmented that it was virtually impossible for task force teachers to meet during a regular planning period. As a result, teachers would typically set aside an afterschool time (3:30-4:15) once a week. Clubs task force, for example, might meet Mondays after school, parent conference task force on Tuesday.

Parents participated in the deliberations of two of the task forces. Four parents participated in the teacher-advisor task force, and four different parents joined the parent conference group. The parents took their responsibilities seriously, attending most meetings and participating in discussions. Parents often sought the advice of other community members and children in making decisions, which provided a different perspective on the problems under consideration. For example, one parent of the teacher-advisor committee talked to her daughter's friends about alternative approaches to forming teacher-advisor groups. This discussion was reported to the task force as part of the deliberations. Because of the purpose of the clubs task force to provide nonacademic and student-oriented activities, two students participated in that task force's discussions.

Certain results of the project can be identified even from a surface analysis. At the end of the year, the task forces had implemented some specific changes in the school program and planned others for the following year. Early in the year, a silent reading period was established. Teachers and students spent the first ten minutes of school reading a book of their choice. By spring, two 15-minute periods were created for a teacher-advisor system. Teachers and administrators worked with small groups of students to provide opportunities to talk in an informal, noncompetitive atmosphere. A ten-week segment of the spring term included club periods. By the end of the school year, teachers had agreed to a plan for the fall term which would increase contacts with parents. In addition, teachers had agreed in principle to a reorganization of class schedules to allow for greater flexibility. Teams of teachers were to be given three hour blocks of time rather than

50-minute periods. Through these less rigid block schedules, teachers believed, they could respond more adequately to demands of instruction or students' interests.

Certain workshop "We Agree" statements were not given explicit attention as the staff focused upon the school-wide task force activities. For example, teachers did agree to utilize better community resources, to teach basic language skills in all classes, and "to involve" special teachers in team meetings. Generally these individual or team related strategies were not explicitly considered during the school year.

The role of the R & D Center staff in the school was to provide technical support. They tended to see themselves as responsible for helping the school staff identify their own priorities and find appropriate strategies. The IGE/S people provided assistance to the specific task forces, arranged for contacts with schools and professional conferences related to ideas under consideration, and helped organize school board presentations about task force efforts.

III

THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND IGE/S ACTIVITIES

The task force activities need to be considered beyond the introduction of activities into the middle school program. These activities existed within certain norms, beliefs which make reasonable and justifiable the various efforts for reform. Illuminating the meaning teachers give to the reform can enable us to assess more adequately the impact of the IGE/S project.

Certain underlying dimensions permeated the faculty's involvement in the task forces. For one thing, there was a concern for consensus decision making, a concept which had been introduced in early workshop activities. During the year, the staff continued to seek changes which had a wide degree of faculty acceptance. The consensus, it will be argued, was built upon a fragile form of commitment and introduced certain organizational biases which worked against the intent of the IGE/S planners. First, the staff tended to interpret the task forces as helping to ameliorate negative student feeling towards the existing activities of instruction. Second, the implemented task force activities maintained a concern with the control and management of students. Third, the IGE/S activities had a symbolic function within the school district. Faced with possible staff reductions due to low enrollments and a low status, the faculty saw the reforms as a way of legitimizing the school program and the need for current staff allocations.

GROUP CONSENSUS AS A SYMBOLIC PROCESS

The general nature of the purpose hierarchy worked against change as it masked the conflicting ideas held about teaching. The commitment of the summer workshop was to general statements about educational purposes such as "to develop a sense of security and trust," "to allow every child to feel worthwhile," or "to develop specific competencies based upon individual needs and interests." The purposes provided emotive symbols which condensed the feelings, hopes, and desires of many who are associated with schools. The abstractness of statements made them highly appealing, and few could disagree.

The ambiguity of the purpose statements permitted teachers with diverse beliefs and practices to accept the purposes without contradiction. Some teachers saw their work as subject-centered; others focused upon psychological characteristics; still others wanted a problem-solving orientation to education. While more will be said about teaching perspectives later, the idea of "individual needs" can illustrate a function of ambiguity. Some subject-centered teachers give diagnostic tests in reading or social studies to identify some missing knowledge which a teacher decides a student should know. The

lacking knowledge becomes a "need," and a "prescription" such as doing a workbook page is devised to meet it. Another teacher is concerned with the "need" of a child to learn how to solve social problems. This teacher meets students' "needs" by creating opportunities for students to develop their own curiosities and seek answers from many different sources. The process of inquiring becomes important, not the learning of a discrete skill or fact.

The purpose hierarchy enabled those two types of teachers to accept the statements of faculty goals without providing concrete referents by which to judge the assumptions and implications of their specific teaching actions. Each teacher is concerned with "needs." Yet each has a different conception of teaching, what learning means, and what the roles of student and teacher should be.

The staff was able to ignore the deep ethical and political issues embedded in educational choices.[5] At its most fundamental level, schooling is the attempt to provide individuals with ways to order and interpret their social world. Implicit in the formation of consciousness are values, attitudes, and ideologies as well as subject-matter. Curricular approaches contain conceptions of individual responsibility and power, of appropriate relationships between people and social institutions, and of the role of the school within a larger economic and social system. The political and ethical choices implicit in the faculty's actions remained hidden through the abstraction of the hierarchy.

The lack of substantive commitment compelled the task forces to devise strategies which would reduce sources of contention or opposition. Each group of teachers had the task of translating the general purpose into specific forms and concrete actions. This would of necessity challenge the particular life space of the staff, yet the task forces had no mandate related to a particular vision of educational affairs. The process of change avoided the implications of the staff's conflicting views of education. As a result, the work-a-day activities of these task groups focused upon identifying a course of action which would accommodate the diverse views of the many faculty members.

A course of least resistance was devised as the task forces' strategy. Least common denominators were sought in programs. Task force discussions were dominated by compromises designed <u>not</u> to challenge taken-for-granted rules of the school. Contrary to the intention of the IGE/S project, the consensus was built upon the pragmatics of reducing substantive dialogues and possible conflict.

One approach to gain program acceptance was not to challenge vested interests. At a meeting of the flexible scheduling task force, for example, a physical education teacher reacted strongly to a suggestion of using the gymnasium for large-group instruction: It would interfere with the current schedule of classes. Eventually the subject was dropped and the staff focused upon other areas of the school. The teacher-advisor task force provided two 15-minute periods for advising

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[5] For discussion of ethical and political issues involved in educational choices see Apple, 1975, and Popkewitz and Wehlage, 1973.

by reducing the passing time allotted between classes. The teachers realized the period was too short for discussions between teachers and students, but the proposal was accepted because the teachers realized the academic teachers would not approve time being subtracted from their regular instructional periods. As one teacher commented at a teacher-advisor task force meeting:

> People will fight about taking the time from their period and we should not have conflict. We don't want people to be negative about the scheduling, so we have to find a way that makes everybody happy. (Observation)

Teachers also sought to prevent the task force proposals from challenging existing work duties or relationships. The notion of flexible scheduling, for example, was developed around rigid organization scheduling which had specialists (foreign language, music, art) moving between teaching at the high school, middle school, and elementary school. There was a reluctance to make new demands upon teaching. A teacher-advisor meeting discussion, for example, focused on the use of cross-aged grouping. A parent thought that groups of different-aged children could help develop a more total sense of community in the school. The teachers disagreed, citing the additional burdens it would demand of teachers. These burdens, they felt, would not be acceptable to the faculty.

> Parent: I want it to be like a family and maybe this would be interage grouping so that kids can help, like peer teaching, can help students adjust to problems at school. For example, my seventh grade daughter could help a sixth grader.
>
> Teacher #1: The problem is adjusting to the pattern of scheduling in the school. It's more intricate to do cross-age planning, you need more planning to get an inter-age grouping.
>
> Teacher #2: If you separate the kids who are in different grades, as you would in inter-age grouping, it's messy. You have the same period every week and you begin falling behind. Teachers are not going to be able to give the same work. (Observation)

The fragile nature of the staff consensus produced tensions within task force deliberations. Teachers expressed reservations, frustration, and anxiety about the level of the actual agreement reached with the staff. There was continual mention of the need to take concrete parts of a program to the faculty for a "We Agree" statement. The "We Agree" statement provided the group with a sense of security that the staff would allow them to proceed. A teacher-advisor group meeting prior to the winter recess, for example, reflected the continued questioning teachers had about the staff's acceptance of their efforts.

> The guidance counselor suggested "a new 'We Agree' statement needed to be formulated, one which would establish that the staff agreed to the procedures that were set out in the in-service." . . . . The guidance counselor remarked that the sixth grade teachers did not want to participate because they already know the children. The sixth grade teachers work with only thirty children, have a homeroom and they know the children fairly well. (Observation)

The problem of using the IGE/S procedures for providing direction was discussed during the interviews. Some teachers found the purpose hierarchy too abstract and nonsequential to guide action.

> It might be a really nice technique to get people involved and get them stirred up, talking and thinking, but when you go to write an outline of the program or you set up the goals of the program, throw it away . . . I would not really understand how one level led to the next and how you could take that hierarchy and go. (Teacher interview)

The vagueness of purposes was reflected in teachers' thoughts about the "We Agree" statements. Many of the initial ideas were highly general, teachers said, and not helpful when considering the concrete substance the task forces proposed. Teachers thought the proposals had to be considered on their specific merits and not on their nebulous relationships to a purpose.

Some teachers also viewed the outward search for consensus as serving the political function of legitimizing directions sought by the administration. At certain times, one teacher argued, "When it was likely a 'We Agree' statement could be achieved, a vote was taken. At other times, when disagreement appeared, there would be no 'we agree' statement and they would go on and on with this 'We Agree' until the thing was accomplished." Another teacher thought the "We Agree" statements served as a public relations device within the school district. (More will be said about this later.)

> I am a little bit disgusted with the fact that it has gotten away from the 'We Agree.' It is being more or less pushed at us so it is mostly been for their benefit up there, just to say, "Hey, we're doing some new things." Now I don't know if they're under the gun from the Superintendent saying: "Hey, we want to see some improvements in that school or curriculum" or whatever. (Teacher interview)

To summarize, the search for consensus had a particular meaning within the middle school context. The constructing of purpose hierarchies and "We Agree" statements permitted the staff to believe they had general agreement on the changes. However, this agreement was largely symbolic. The efforts to implement concrete changes in programs produced sources of opposition as the proposals challenged specific rules and vested interests in the school. The task forces chose

to maintain staff commitment by not challenging the specific motives and intentions guiding the day-to-day activities of the school. It is to these motives and intentions we now turn our attention.

MAKING EXISTING PRACTICES REASONABLE

One of the major innovations of the school year was the introduction of teacher-advisor groups. Teachers and parents suggested that children needed to develop a more trusting and personal relationship with adults in the school. Further it was reasoned that the large classes (25-30) plus a teacher's large number of classes (5 per day) made this personal contact difficult. Teachers argued, correctly I think, that successful teaching depends upon an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

The problem, however, could be understood from a variety of perspectives. First, one could say that there is something wrong in the patterns of interaction between professionals and students in each class. Different instructional strategies and conceptions of curriculum could be devised to deal with the problem. Second, a teacher might say it is difficult to develop trust and respect when meeting 125 students a day. The problem of scheduling, moving, and controlling so many children mitigates against any sustained involvement among faculty and students. A strategy could be sought to reorganize school groupings to involve smaller numbers of students with faculty. In addition, different expectations and patterns of interaction within any one class could be explored to promote mutual respect, trust, and intellectual pursuits. Both alternatives stress the general institutional character of the problem by focusing upon structural qualities of schooling. A third type of approach focuses upon the students as the problem. The goal is to make students believe the school is a better place while not altering in any fundamental way the conditions in which students work. Innovations function to make existing routines and regularities seem more palatable to students. An analogy in industry is the introduction of better lighting or more coffee breaks to increase production without considering the social and ethical implications of the assembly line itself.

It is the third approach which characterized the staff's use of the task forces. Teachers generally treated their involvement in the IGE/S project as a way of making reasonable the ongoing activities, priorities, and assumptions of their teaching. Many teachers defined the issue of educational reform as eliminating a feeling of mistrust and alienation among students. Children were seen as having a neutral or negative attitude towards school. Things were stolen. Vandalism occurred. Drugs had been used. Behind the task forces' efforts was a desire to help students develop better attitudes toward "what teachers were doing, to try harder, to do better."

> The staff was concerned about improving relationships between students, and between teachers, and hopefully, have a more positive atmosphere within the school. A lot of negative things

> have happened in the past. There's been a lot of vandalism, students seem very negative toward school. The school has received a lot of pressure from the community because the middle school is viewed as not a real desirable place for students to be in at times. They feel that the climate is bad. There are drugs. (Teacher interview)

The effort to eliminate student alienation produced a basic dichotomy between IGE/S activities and the regular school program. The teacher-advisor system, USSR, and clubs, for example, were defined as "human development" activities. They could provide limited situations within the school day for personalized contacts with students. The human development activities were thought of as separate from the "academic" but helpful as a mechanism for gaining student acceptance of the regular school programs. This distinction between academic and human development was explained by a guidance counselor considering the purpose of teacher-advisor systems.

> Q. I'm still not clear about the distinction you are making between academic and teacher-advisor system.
>
> A. Well, the difference is that academic is concerned with what the student does. The TA counseling is concerned with who the student is. Academic work is concerned with motivating kids to work, to help them adapt to programs, to keep students informed, to help them with their habits of study, to meet with students about evaluating their course work and monitoring what they're doing in the subject-matter. TA, on the other hand, is concerned with human development. I see the pattern as the growth of a total person and how they come across to others and relate to others. It's concerned with interpersonal relations and the perceptions that others have. (Interview)

Another faculty member also saw the personal development emphasis as important to the task force work.

> I think they meant social needs, interactions between students, having positive relationships between students and teachers, and then, through that, the students would be happier and more fulfilled, and also meeting their needs academically, but I don't think that there was a real academic thrust at all. It was more social, meeting social needs and personal needs. (Teacher interview)

The dichotomy enabled many teachers to view the problem of trust and respect as unrelated to their everyday activities. In discussing the assignments to teacher-advisor groups, one teacher suggested the classroom teachers "had responsibility for reporting on students' work and therefore would not be trusted." Another teacher justified separate teacher-advisor periods by saying, "We have 50 minutes in academics and can't squeeze in the TA as a teacher. It's neat to know

children. The buses leave at 3:00 and there is no way of getting to know them except through a TA period." During an inservice meeting, a question was raised about whether the advisor (teacher) be called by a first name. After a few comments, it was suggested, "Well, they could do it only in here, and then when they go out they start calling teachers by their last name." Trust was on the agenda only for the group meeting.

Other task force work also reflected a view that the reforms were separate from, yet supportive, of regular school activities. Some teachers saw the reorganization in flexible scheduling as a more efficient way of conveying the existing lessons. One teacher suggested flexible scheduling would enable him to teach one lesson to 120 students rather than repeat it four or five times. Clubs was thought of as a form of play, distinct from learning activities of the school. Parent conferences were to provide a more effective way to convey information to parents. Few teachers felt that more communication with parents in a dialogic way would affect what and how to teach.

CONTROL AS A FACTOR OF REFORM

A major dimension of the staff's involvement in the task groups was the legitimation of existing forms of school control. The fact that control was a factor is of no surprise. Since institutionalized actions contain regularized patterns of conduct, forms of social control are inevitably created. The important question, therefore, is the nature of that control. Much of the middle school staff activity gave credence to a professional control over the ideas and social relationships of students. This control orientation was reflected in teaching perspectives and discussion about strategies of reform.

At least three perspectives to teaching existed among the middle school staff: subject matter, human development, and problem solving. While no one teacher would fit all the characteristics of an ideal type, the three categories provide a way of thinking about the variation. The sets of beliefs about teaching and curriculum guided the teachers' interpretation of the proposed reforms and gave direction in finding solutions to educational problems.

The dominant faculty perspective was the subject-matter orientation. The teachers in that group believed there exists a specified, limited body of knowledge to be imparted to students. Knowledge is treated as an "object" or "thing" that is given to individuals. Students are to master the teacher's predetermined facts or generalizations. Most often, the teachers justified this learning by saying "students need this information for the next grade" or "it will be required when they get into high school."

Testing and grading is an important dimension of subject-centered teaching. The test validates the student success in knowledge acquisition. Although teachers often referred to important nontestable aspects of teaching and learning, much of their time was taken up with making, giving, and scoring tests. Achievement was defined in precise scores, such as sums of correct answers on quizzes. During the year

many teachers were observed working with tests during periods assigned for class preparation. Teachers paid careful attention to test scores and entered them in a specially designed booklet. One team meeting, for example, centered entirely upon these booklets. The team had to decide which students performed well enough to get end-of-year awards. Teachers summarized the test scores written for each student, compared the scores with team members, and then made a decision on who would be given a scholarship award.

Individualization to the subject-centered teacher meant devising strategies which would enable students to master the content. Packets of materials were to be created by which students would pace themselves through a given program.

> An individualized math program to me would mean, there is some structure provided to the student. In the sixth grade we have addition, subtraction, division, etc., fractions, percent measurement. Okay, we find out where the student should be working, or what he has mastered right now. If he has mastered addition, subtraction, division, fine, then he starts in fractions, works through various levels, and we allow him to progress at his own pace. That's what individualized means to me. (Teacher interview)

The subject-centered perspective was supported by and supportive of the existing school organization. Much of the organization of teachers and students concerned the control and ordering of people. Time in school was divided according to subject-matter specialties. Teachers were classified by content they were to make available to students. Evaluation was determined by seemingly precise number systems. Further, each teacher was assigned to convey the appropriate knowledge to 125 students. Time became a precious commodity to be used correctly. There were so many minutes to learn history or French and to pass between classes. French, band, and music teachers moved between district schools to their allotted places and periods. The carefully orchestrated movement was an important part of both the teachers' and students' day. Each had to move "purposefully." The student was to get to his desk and sit quietly. The teacher was to ensure an orderly transition of students from one place to another.

It was the subject-matter specialists who reacted most strongly to proposals which would limit the time of teaching periods. The 50-minute period, they argued, is barely enough time to present all the knowledge students need. To take away time for nonacademics posed an unwarranted restraint upon their teaching.

> I guess I feel right now that I only have these kids for 50 minutes a day and trying to cram reading, writing, spelling, and literature into one 50-minute period and for 180 days; trying and expecting these kids to really improve. I'm really having a hard time--there are so many things this year that I never got into because there just wasn't the time. (Teacher interview)

The subject-matter teacher believed obeying directions was integrally related to learning content: "Kids have to learn. You can't let the kids take the period to play. You need to slap their hands when they misbehave. Time is a valuable commodity in school." Discipline means to sit quietly in classrooms, to move quickly and orderly through halls, and to complete assignments neatly and on time; to have self-discipline is viewed as having potential for achievement.

The discipline-centered teachers tended to separate the staff according to their control or their laxness. Exerting tight control, a teacher argued, was a "professional approach" to teaching. The teacher's approach "has a tremendous influence on the kids. I think that there are some people who are tougher staff members and there are those who are pushovers, where students can go and weasel out of something."

The "pushovers" were the "human development" teachers, a second teaching perspective. These teachers focused primarily on student feelings and the psychological effects of teaching and learning. The problem of teaching is seen as "the growth of a total person and how they come across to others and relate to others." The human development teacher gives attention to the interpersonal relationships in school, and content learning is secondary to development of a "warm, trusting" relationship. These teachers viewed subject-matter teachers as "traditional" and "fearful" of the risk involved in taking a human development approach.

To the human development teacher, individualization is establishing an atmosphere in which students work in small groups to explore attitudes, feelings, and values:

> It is a way to talk with kids and how they're doing in school, relating more to their individual needs, and dislikes and values, their attitudes towards teachers. (Teacher interview)

A third perspective on teaching can be called "the problem solver." This teacher was typically concerned with an interrelation of subject matter and the psychological atmosphere in the classroom. The problem-solving teacher would view the teacher-advisor system as psychologically important. It allows students to feel less constrained in their interactions with teachers and should be incorporated into regular classroom activities. However, students' tasks in school are not only psychological. There are materials students should be acquainted with and books to be read. The ideal of the problem-solver teacher is to have children develop curiosities which they investigate in search of answers. Individualization is a form of scholarship in which individuals explore personal curiosities. As one teacher reported, this type of individualization doesn't happen often enough.

> Q. Can you provide an illustration of individualized instruction?
>
> A. The advanced student might get a chance to do some research on his own, into specific interests that he had about that continent or that country, or he might, if he had, you know in the community there were people who had either visited that area or had pictures or mementos or that sort of thing

> and they could do some kind of research or go and talk to that person. That happened a couple of times. (Teacher interview)

The subject-centered belief was dominant in the school, and it was from that orientation system that the IGE/S reorganizations were seen. Teachers considered many of the task force proposals in relationship to the order and discipline requirements of the school, wanting to ensure that reforms would not disrupt established routines or provide students with freedoms "they were not ready yet to handle." During a teacher inservice to explain the teacher-advisor system, for example, some teachers reacted strongly against the possible chaos resulting from group dynamics approaches. After observing a group dynamics exercise in which each member's name was repeated three times, a teacher responded that the approach was too lax: "What happens if kids go bananas? What do we do?"

Sometimes the reforms were used to root out parts of the school day which teachers felt were troublesome. Passing time was one of the disturbances. Students had five minutes between periods. It was here students became unruly and posed "problems." One way to reduce the possibility of trouble was to ensure that students' movement through the halls was "purposeful, for it can be clocked at two or three minutes." With this in mind, reducing passing time to three minutes to provide for teacher advisory periods seemed a reasonable solution.

> The problem is too much time between classes. There is five minutes passing time. We should cut it to three minutes. That would give us six minutes a day, 30 minutes a week for the student and counseling. That would eliminate most importantly for me, the problem of the hall for the eighth graders. That is an unruly time. (Observation)

The consensus brought about by the IGE/S processes worked against change. The school's new purposes were phrased so abstractly that everyone could agree, but the agreement only masked the different ideas by which teachers chose. The search for consensus also had to get people in a mood to accept the proposals of the task forces, which led to a strategy of avoiding conflict and confrontation. The resulting consensus introduced an organizational bias which supported the subject-matter perspective and its related emphasis upon control and discipline.

WHY ALLOW OUTSIDE INTERVENTION? THE EXTERNAL POLITICS OF A SCHOOL

Why does a school agree to have outsiders intervene in its internal policy matters? The avowed intention of the IGE/S staff was to change the ways in which people worked in the school. They sought a shared decision making process which would alter the status of teachers, principals, and to some extent, parents. Further, the IGE/S staff itself was a new source of outside influence in school affairs. The history of institutions suggests that such challenges to the status quo would produce resentment and hostility. Organizations tend to be

self-protective and to maintain their members' prerogatives, status, and privileges (Becker, 1970). To answer the question about why the project was accepted, we need to turn to the middle school's relationship within the school district.

The middle school's agreement to work with the IGE/S project was related to two district-wide problems the school was having. First, the district had declining enrollments. The following year the sixth and seventh grades were to be reduced by one-third, causing staff cuts. The introduction of IGE/S into the middle school, the principal reasoned, would serve political as well as educational purposes. The IGE/S program would provide leverage with the superintendent and school board in maintaining staff. Administrators and teachers saw the project as providing an argument against cutbacks by giving evidence of the innovative quality of the staff.

> But when IGE/S, but when something from outside can come in, come into a school and the principal can take something to the board of education and say "Look, we had the University come in here, the R & D Center, and developed IGE/S. Look, first you've got the University, the R & D, then you've got IGE/S. You've got impressive sounding things right away. Say "We've had them come in, they've set up programs and this is what we're doing." (Teacher interview)

A second political aspect of the case was related to the intra-district rivalry between the middle and high schools. Many of the middle school teachers viewed their school as a "step-child" in the district. They complained that the high school principal was very aggressive and maintained his programs at the expense of other district schools. Recent budget cuts, for example, had not affected the high school. Further, middle school teachers felt the high school staff and superintendent saw their school as having no identifiable focus and the middle school staff as second-rate teachers who created remedial problems the high school staff had to correct. The IGE/S program, teachers argued, could provide the middle school with an identifiable focus and credibility within the district.

> It seems like new programs can come out of the high school, for example, and they get zapped up--those are terrific. But they come out of middle school and it seems like they never get off the ground for one reason or the other. So whenever you have something come in from the outside, like IGE/S, Mr. Superintendent and the board can look at it and say, "Hey, look it, this is coming from the University. Boy, they must be doing something over there." (Teacher interview)

The legitimizing function of the IGE/S project manifested itself within the school in different ways during the year. Often task force discussions gave attention to ways of publicizing the activities. Efforts were made to have the local newspaper and school newsletter publish accounts of task force activities. Further, each task force pre-

sented its specific proposals to the board of education. These presentations, it was hoped, would keep the board acquainted with and supportive of the staff activities. Discussing the successes of U.S.S.R., the reorganization plan of flexible scheduling, or the introduction of TA periods provided the board with tangible evidence of the staff's ongoing efforts.

The staff viewed the board presentations as public relations. A teacher-advisor group preparation for a board meeting, for example, was concerned with providing the minimal information required to make the board members aware of their activities.

> The leader of the group was nervous about preparing materials and making a presentation to the board. After much debate about what to include in the presentation, the group decided to give few materials. An administrator suggested the group leader make a very general statement and that "probably is all that is required." It was also suggested that parent members of the group attend to give moral support. It became clear, however, that the presentation to the board of education had no function except for "information." (Observation)

Parent participation was, in part, related to the staff's need for acceptance. They could provide recognition and support from the community and the district administration, and, the teachers reasoned, board members and the superintendent would look more favorably upon the teachers' proposals if parents joined in the presentations.

Implicit in the preparation for the board meeting was the lobbying with the school superintendent. The superintendent had been in the district for a number of years and seemed to establish priorities with or without the consent of the principals. This political reality became an important dimension in deciding upon an approach to flexible scheduling.

> Before we start our meeting, I want you to know that the superintendent sets priorities with or without consultation with the principal. The principal then informs other administrators in the school. The IGE/S staff should be aware of the power hierarchy as we proceed to talk about flexible scheduling. (Administrator interview)

Later that year, the same administrator talked about the IGE/S project giving the necessary visibility to the superintendent: "For the first time I think he is impressed with what the staff is doing. The superintendent is a high school man, and," added the administrator, "he has often overlooked the middle school's accomplishments."

As the spring semester began, the administration sought to use the IGE/S project as political leverage to argue against possible staff reductions. At a February meeting of the flexible scheduling group, the staff began to prepare for a board meeting in which a plan would be presented. In the back of everyone's mind was the staff reduction (two to six teachers) for the fall term. Teachers and administrators argued the adoption of flexible scheduling would require the same

staffing as this year. At a March staff meeting, the principal again echoed these thoughts:

> Well, we can take the initiative away from the school board by proposing block scheduling. But I need a commitment from the staff.

When it became obvious that there would be staff reductions, many of the staff became hostile to the IGE/S project: "If teachers are cut," one suggested, "there should be no IGE/S program." While the ability to implement a more flexible schedule or other aspects of the IGE/S program were unrelated to the reduction of the staff, the faculty reaction was related to the political function of the project. Teachers had believed the project would prevent teacher cuts, and when it did not serve that function some considered it a liability.

> I'm very disillusioned with our board, with all that we've been knocking ourselves over backwards as far as I'm concerned, trying to get all this done, and about all we got from it was a slap in the face, and staff cuts and a whole bunch of shit firstly, so no, I don't think IGE/S has helped us relate to the board one bit. I'm very bitter.

IV

CONCLUSIONS

The IGE/S involvement in the middle school did produce certain school-wide programmatic changes. Through the task force activities, the staff engaged in discussions about educational purposes and school programs. The "purpose hierarchies" and "We Agree" statements started the staff thinking about the relationship of educational purposes to school practices. The staff accepted the task of designing and implementing new school-wide programs; teacher-advisor system, clubs, and an uninterrupted silent reading period were made part of the school program. Preparations to introduce changes in parent conferences and a more flexible scheduling of classes were made for the following year. In addition, parents and, in one instance, students participated in the planning process.

At a deeper interpretive level, the basic teaching assumptions of the middle school staff remained unchallenged. The change strategies supported existing dispositions towards education. School was seen as a problem of gaining control and discipline so students would acquiesce to the authority of professionals. Teachers saw the task force activities as separate from their academic task but as a way of making the control and discipline of school seem psychologically appealing. The task forces functioned externally to legitimate the school program within the larger community.

The conservative direction of the reforms was in part an unintended consequence of the project strategy for staff consensus. The workshop approach sought to gain a general commitment to change. The statements of purpose and subsequent "We Agree" statements, however, were abstract and general and appealed to people with many teaching perspectives. The statements' implications for teachers' conceptions of their professional tasks and organization of their work were not examined critically. The generality of the statements enabled the staff to maintain their current beliefs without posing any contradictions.

The vagueness of staff commitment influenced the task force actions in two ways. First, it was assumed the problems of educational purpose were solved. The purpose hierarchy gave teachers a false sense of commitment and allowed them to ignore the deep political, ethical, and social questions involved in defining purpose. Individualization became a slogan which had little concrete reference to school activities. The task of the faculty became technical: "Let's get the job done." Teachers tended to ignore the disparate reasons people gave for accepting the proposed changes. The search for change became a search for a set of procedures acceptable to the staff.

Second, the reduction of conflict among staff members was a major consideration in task force deliberation. Since faculty commitment was built on a precarious foundation, the task forces needed to find

a least common denominator in implementing proposals. Procedures were devised for the teacher-advisor system, flexible scheduling, or parent conferences that would not infringe upon existing school rules or customs. The vested interests and existing school priorities were taken for granted.

The search for a common denominator introduced an organizational bias. The dominant teaching perspective--subject-centered teaching--was given further credence. The task force activities were thought of as providing the psychological conditions in which the existing approaches would seem reasonable to both students and community. Many faculty hoped that through human development techniques, students would be more accepting of the "real" work of school. This perspective defined the teacher as a knower and teaching as the problem of control. The task of teaching was to distribute knowledge to the benighted.

At the end of the year, the IGE/S approach had produced no rationale or coherent curriculum plan for school-wide individualization of instruction. Teachers and administrators became involved in the planning process without considering curricular problems. In part, curricular design can be viewed as having substantive issues independent of a planning process. Curricular issues, however, were not addressed.

What are some of the implications of these findings for the problem of school change?

First. The problem of change should be considered, in part, a political process. There is an interplay between the teachers' beliefs and the organizational structure of work in schools. The subject-centered perspective is related to a school organization which fragments knowledge into "objects" to be learned, defines professional status and privilege through the structure of school activities, and so on. To make the teaching perspective problematic is to challenge not only one view of the world but the vested interests which are legitimated by the view. To have done so in the middle school situation, the staff would not only have had to question their own ideas about teaching but the nature of appropriate power for principal and teachers in controlling the knowledge and social arrangements of students.

Second. The notion of technical assistance needs to be reconsidered. "To start where a school is" cannot mean to imply existing practices are reasonable and to provide a staff with help clarifying their own purposes and strategies. The belief that a school staff can identify and plan to alter its own assumptions and power arrangements seems to belie experience. A planning approach, therefore, must provide a critical dialogue about the priorities and underlying characteristics of institutional life. This entails considering the moral responsibilities of teaching <u>in a context of social action</u>.

The role of the intervening agent should be to stimulate and encourage a dialogue. This function is as much educational as instrumental. Curricular issues must be given explicit attention. The direction of the dialogue should be to have a staff consider the interplay of curriculum, organizational structures, and ethical choice. The dialogue, I believe, should not be to impose but to develop a pro-

fessional consciousness in which people in the context of schools can become more enlightened about the consequences of their actions. As Dewey commented, it is out of understanding the problem that we evolve methods. Problems of curricular design and methods of school change are dialectically related.

Third. The separation of affective and cognitive dimensions misconstrues the nature of social action. The human development focus posited a psychological orientation to the problem of change. It assumed that values and feeling are independent of the social or objective conditions of school life. In fact, this belief is not supported. Embedded in the regularities and assumptions of school are values and dispositions to guide action. The social and subjective dimensions of schooling are intertwined and gave meaning to the clubs, teacher-advisor, or flexible scheduling task forces.

One might ask, why do educators separate the affective and cognitive dimensions of social affairs? First, it does seem commonsensical. The complexity of human activities, we believe, compels us to make distinctions between valuative and factual knowledge. Analytically, the dichotomy is false. Our most cognitive knowledge, social theory for example, contains emotions, attitudes, and dispositional stances towards the social world (Apple and Popkewitz, 1971). In this specific study, different teaching perspectives found in the middle school contained not only facts about instruction but also values about how one should act toward children. Second, reformers may think if you can get teachers to develop accepting attitudes towards change, institutional change will follow. The empirical evidence in this case suggests this does not work. The focus on psychological dimensions produced a conservative response. Students' feelings were manipulated to develop acceptance about the existing structure of school.

Fourth. As schools currently exist, there is little or no time for reflection or critical analysis. The middle school teachers had their day filled with the ordinary routines and regularities of school. Meeting after school for task force matters tended to rush discussion. Part of the problem of change becomes how to make the regular school day a period of reflective activity for teachers as well as students. The problem is not setting aside a period such as was done for the teacher-advisor system, but creating a community discourse. The ability to critically reflect must be imbued in all activities of <u>both</u> professionals and students in a school.

Fifth. The power of the superintendent and principal in deciding school matters needs to be considered. The middle school was hierarchically organized, and administrators had power in the determination of a situation even though they often were not present in decision making. These people need to be committed to change and understand the ideological and political implications of that commitment.

Sixth. Schools are dynamic social contexts. The planning approach must be able to respond to unanticipated events, human ambiguities, the particular conditions of the setting, and the politics involved in substantive change. The planning process cannot be "packaged" into "models" which define human action as linear or additive (Romberg, 1976). The process is dialectical and related to dealing with the motives and actions of people in the contexts of their work.

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